

September 21, 2014

Program Review and Investigative Committee  
Room 506 Capital Building  
Hartford, CT 06106

Dear Members of the PRI Committee:

Thank you for hosting this hearing to look at transition services for individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorders. Although I am unable to attend the hearing, I am hoping that I may share a little with you in this letter to help you gain a better understanding of the needs my son faces as he works to become a contributing member of our community. My son is 19 years old and currently a sophomore at Central Connecticut State University majoring in math. This week he will be inducted into the Alpha Lambda Delta Honor Society. He recently started a job with the Institute for Municipal and Regional Policy at CCSU. In fact, this summer he worked on the Racial Profiling Prohibition Project and on the report released this month to the General Assembly. He also enjoys weekly dance lessons at Arthur Murray Dance Studios. He sounds like a young man that is heading places, right? While we are so proud of his accomplishments, you must also know that there is a "village" behind him that is working to help make all this happen and continue to move him forward.

Although Tyler is cognitively very capable, he needs a great deal of support and teaching with independent living skills and vocational needs. We were not able to access services from our town after our son met his academic requirements for graduation so we have had to develop a program for him. We currently have a private life skills coach that works 10 hours a week with our son to help him organize his school work, advocate any needs with his college professors, and so much more. We have modeled this after the Autism Waiver Program with the help of our son's psychologist. While Tyler is currently on the waitlist, we know it will likely be years before he can obtain services. We continue to provide him the opportunity to attend weekly social skills sessions as well as therapy with his psychologist and psychiatrist.

Tyler's job with IMRP came through the work of Bureau of Rehabilitation Services and two opportunities to go before the BRS Autism Committee. It took a year and a tremendous amount of advocating to reach this point. Tyler was originally told that he did not qualify for services from BRS primarily because of the social challenges that greatly impact him as an individual with ASD. He had been fired from jobs in the past even with coaching. Now with the help of his job coach and a good placement, Tyler has had the opportunity to gain skills and be part of something meaningful. Right now time is being spent to teach Tyler how to ride the public bus so he can go from campus to the downtown New Britain office. While we are so thrilled with his progress, we know that he will continue to need periodic job coaching if he wants to advance in his career and grow.

We still have plenty of challenges ahead for our son to become independent. Can he learn to drive? Where will he live? How much can he manage on his own? Can he handle a full work week on the job? We do know that our son needs and will continue to need the help and support of state agencies like BRS and DDS for many years to come. Please help to put the right programs and supports in place so we can create positive outcomes for our adults with autism.

Sincerely

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